



Cambridge Past, Present & Future  
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**Response to 26/02109/FUL: Replacement library and other alterations and improvements at Christ's College Library Christ's College St Andrew's Street Cambridge**

Cambridge Past, Present & Future is Cambridge's largest civic society. We are a charity run by local people who are passionate about where they live. We operate in the greater Cambridge area and working with our members, supporters and volunteers we:

- Are dedicated to protecting and enhancing the green setting of Cambridge for people and nature.
- Care about Cambridge and are an independent voice for quality of life in the strategic planning of Greater Cambridge.
- Are working to protect, celebrate and improve the important built heritage of the Cambridge area.
- Own and care for green spaces and historic buildings in and around the city for people and nature, including Wandlebury Country Park, Coton Countryside Reserve, Cambridge Leper Chapel & Barnwell Meadows, Bourn Windmill and Hinxton Watermill.

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**1. Context of this Representation:**

In our representation to the original 2025 submission (25/02161/FUL), CPPF did not formally object but raised targeted layout and design queries. However, the submission of a completely new standalone application requires the Local Planning Authority to evaluate the proposal afresh against an expanded context of community input and a claim that proper consideration had not been given to Historic England's comments.

Whilst Historic England did not object to the 2025 application, they strongly encouraged that the massing is further reduced so it sits better within the context of the listed buildings and conservation area. In view of the legal challenge that proper consideration was not given to this advice, we are disappointed that this guidance has been ignored, and that no amendments have been made.

While CPPF supports the principle of Christ's College improving its academic facilities, we cannot ignore the deep local opposition from residents, and everyday users of Christ's Lane. Backed by the advice of Historic England provided in 2025 and evidence compiled by the Christ's Lane Action Group (CLAG) we wish to make the following comments.

**2. Amplifying Statutory Concerns and Conflict with Local Plan Policy 61.**

Historic England have reiterated their advice given in on 25/02161/FUL dated 29 July 2025, and therefore CPPF aligns its concerns with their advice which states that the proposed building "feels too big" and is "overdominant" on its site. While the removal of the 2016 scheme's full basement was framed as a sustainability benefit, it has forced the building to expand upward to maintain internal capacity.

This resulting bulk causes, multi-layered harm to highly sensitive designated heritage assets and stands in conflict with Policy 61 (Conservation and Enhancement of Cambridge's Historic Environment) of the Cambridge Local Plan:

- **Failure to Preserve or Enhance:** Policy 61 requires that development proposals preserve or enhance the significance of the city's heritage assets, including their settings. Historic England notes that the decision to lift the wall level to the turret level makes the structure increasingly overbearing in its immediate relationship with the Grade I listed Bodley Library, failing this policy test.
- **Inappropriate Street Profile:** Historic England warns that the massive ventilation stacks and chimneys are not proportionate to the more modest chimneys of Christ's College. Without a substantial reduction, they will challenge the visual prominence of the historic chapel turret on the skyline and overwhelm the modest scale of Christ's College's historic streetscape, notably Christ's Lane.
- **Unjustified Heritage Harm:** The design results in certain levels of harm across multiple assets, including the setting of the Grade I listed Bodley Library, Bath Court, and the Central Conservation Area. Under Policy 61 and Paragraph 206 of the NPPF, clear and convincing justification must be provided for any such harm, and the minimal public benefits identified here fail to outweigh these costs.

### 3. Conclusion

A deliverable, contextually sensitive alternative that honours the human scale of Christ's Lane is entirely achievable. Cambridge City Council has a duty to give special regard to preserving listed settings and enhancing conservation areas. We urge the applicant and Council to recognise the impact on the listed buildings and character and appearance of the Conservation Area and negotiate a lower and less bulky design.

I trust that you will take our comments into consideration.

Yours sincerely

*Sarah Nicholas*

Principal Planning Officer